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**FWP Notices**

Environmental Assessment

**Boone & Crockett Club Shooting Range Environmental Assessment**

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Comments on this notice are due: **6/24/2002**[Click here to comment on this notice](#)**MEPA/NEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST****PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION****1. Type of proposed state action:** Shooting Range Development Funding Assistance

**2. Agency authority for the proposed action:** Montana Legislature has authorized funding for the establishment of a Shooting Range Development Program, providing financial assistance for the development of shooting ranges for public purposes. Furthermore, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has responsibility for the administration of the program, including the necessary guidelines and procedures governing applications for funding assistance under the program.

**3. Name of project:** Boone and Crockett Club/Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch Rifle and Shotgun Ranges, Dupuyer, MT

**4. Name, address and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency):** Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks is project sponsor .

**5. If applicable:**

Estimated Construction/Commencement Date: July 15, 2002

Estimated Completion Date: August 15, 2002

Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 100%

**6. Location affected by proposed action (county, range and township):**

Shotgun Range: Teton County, Section 5, T27N, R8W

Rifle Range: Teton County, Section 17, T27N, R8W

**7. Project size -- estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently: (total tract size = 10 acres)**

Acres Acres(a) Developed: (d) Floodplain 0Residential 0Industrial 0 (e) Productive:Irrigated cropland 0(b) Open Space/Woodlands/Recreation 0 Dry cropland 0Forestry 0(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas 0 Rangeland 5.1 Other 0

8. Map/site plan: Attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.

9. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits:

**Agency Name Permit Date Filed/ #**

*None*

(b) Funding:

Agency Name Funding Amount

*None*

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name Type of Responsibility

*None*

10. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action:  
*Proposed Action: Construction of two shooting ranges on the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch, Dupuyer, MT, a shotgun range and a rifle range.*

*The Boone & Crockett Club Foundation has a Deed of Conservation Easement with The Nature Conservancy on the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch. Item 4D, of that Easement, under Consistent Uses of the Property, states that the following is consistent with the Easement: Construction, maintenance, repair and use of a Research and Education Facility, a skeet and trap shooting range and necessary outbuildings associated with the uses of the Property" and Item 4M, allows for: Construction, maintenance, repair and use of a shooting range and necessary outbuilding associated with the uses of the Property authorized by the Easement, so long as these actions conform to applicable federal, state or local laws, or regulations"*

*Both of the ranges meet the standards of design, siting, and safety established by the National Rifle Association for ranges of this type.*

*As required, Copies of the Applicant 's Project Resolution, notarized and signed by the executive director are attached. The Rifle Range is Resolution Number 0201 and the Shotgun Range is Resolution Number 0202 (See Attachment A, Project Resolutions).*

*Shotgun Range: A 5" Stand Sporting Clays range will be established for the shotgun area. The sporting clays machines will be mounted on wheeled carts, moved around the area for shooting, and then stored in the range control house when not in use. Sporting clays machines will be mechanical/electrical and powered with solar chargers. The range control house will consist of a 12'X24' wood frame building. There will be minimal ground disturbance on the shotgun range, and it will be limited to a 30'X90' area (See attachment B, Shotgun Range). Excavation and leveling will be to accommodate the range control house and a level area in front of it. The range control house will serve as a warming facility and a clay target and machine storage area. An ATV trail will be established from the main road to the facility to provide access. The range will encompass about 3 acres. Additionally a safety fan/impact area will extend out 300 yards beyond the end of the range and will encompass about 10 acres. There will be no concrete shooting pads, paths or machine pads other than the control house. There*

*will also be no utility trenches or lines.*

*Rifle Range: The rifle range will be 100' wide X 916' long and will encompass about 2.1 acres. Target lines will be set at 50, 100, 200 and 300 yards. Berms will be constructed at 100, 200 and 300 yards (See Attachment C, Rifle Range Layout). The slope of the site allows for the berms to be placed in line down range and allow for shooting over each target line to the next beyond it. The range will have a 12'X60' steel framed range control house, a 12'X60' lean-to shooting shelter, and a pre-cast concrete vault toilet (See Attachment D, Rifle Range).*

*The range control house will be steel framed construction with a steel roof. Additionally 12' Powder River horse panels" will be used to encircle the range house to preclude livestock damage when house is not in use and range is open for grazing.*

*The 12'X60' lean-to shooting shelter will be divided into five 12'X12' shooting bays for covered bench-rest shooting. Each bay (5) will have a 4'X5' concrete pad with anchors for shooting benches. A weather proof shooting bench and a storage box will be installed on each concrete pad. An additional uncovered 40' level area will be located adjacent to the shooting shelter and will complete the 100' shooting line.*

*Cut and fill or approximately 2460 yards will be necessary to create the 100'X916' shooting range, as follows:*

*A 10'X100' level area for 50' target line.*

*Three 8'X100' berms for the 100, 200 and 300 yard target lines.*

*A 16'X100' level for the 12'X60' range control house.*

*A 16'X100' level for the 12'X60' lean-to shooting shelter and uncovered 12'X40' shooting area.*

*Excavation for the pre-cast concrete vault toilet.*

*Provisions to provide electrical service are incorporated within the design and electrical service is readily available at the site, but it is not in the current construction plan.*

*Statement of Need and Benefits:*

*Need: To enhance the general public's opportunity for ethical and quality outdoor hunting and shooting experiences. Outdoor shooting & field exercises conducted at the rifle and shotgun ranges will be held in concert with hunter education courses held at the Rasmuson Wildlife Conservation Center. These experiences will aid in the understanding of hunter and conservation ethics, hunter safety, and ethical and accurate marksmanship. It is very important that safe designated ranges be developed for these purposes.*

*Benefits: The ranges will be an integral part of the hunting and conservation education and ethics programs taught through the Elmer E. Rasmuson Wildlife Conservation Center. The benefits of these ranges for the public will be many. The setting will provide a location for hunters to setup organized shooting events for Hunter Education, 4H Shooting Sports, Federal and State agencies requiring a facility for continuing education with shooting ranges, and local sportsman groups in cooperation with the Boone & Crockett Club. Ranges such as these, which are well constructed and managed, will strive to enhance the safety skills of all participating hunters.*

*11. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:*

*Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:*

*Gary Olson, Area Wildlife Biologist, Conrad, MT*

*Tom Flowers, Fish & Game Warden, Choteau, MT*

**PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

*Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.*

**A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

<b>1. LAND RESOURCES</b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated *</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	
a. * * Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?			X			
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			x			1b.
c. * * Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?			X			
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?			X			
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?			X			
f. Other:			X			1f.

***Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):***

*1b. Soil disruption is minimal for this site and is very localized. Approximately 2460 yards will be disturbed to build the rifle range. This will be for the construction of three 8'X100' berms and leveling for firing line, target line, range control building, and lean-to shooting shelter.*

*1f. The Boone & Crockett Club Foundation has a Deed of Conservation Easement with The Nature Conservancy. Item 4K3 of that deed says: Areas of surface disturbances shall have only limited and localized impact, shall be in places approved by the Conservancy, and shall be mitigated by restoring soils to the original contours and replanting native vegetation." Additionally Item 5D of the Deed, prohibits the mining of sand, gravel, rock, topsoil and similar materials except for the use by the Grantor for road maintenance on the property."*

<b>2. AIR</b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated *</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
a. * * Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. * * * For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)		X				
f. Other:		X				

***Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):***

*This area is in attainment for air quality. The proposed alternative does not directly impact air quality on or near the proposed area.*

IMPACT *						
3. WATER						
Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
a. * Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?						
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				3f.
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				3f.
h. Increase in risk of		X				3f.

contamination of surface or groundwater?

X

i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?

X

j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?

X

k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?

X

l. \* \* \* \* For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)

X

m. \* \* \* For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)

X

n. Other:

***Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):***

*Under the proposed construction and operation of the shooting ranges, it is not expected to directly or indirectly affect the water resources of Montana.*

*3f. The Boone & Crockett Club Foundation has a Deed of Conservation Easement with The Nature Conservancy. Item 5E of that deed prohibits, The manipulation of wetlands, the construction of pond, the drainage of surface or sub-surface waters and any uses or activities which would pollute or degrade the surface or sub-surface waters on or underlying the Property."*

4. <u>VEGETATION</u>	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X				4a.



b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				4e.
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other:		X				

***Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Vegetation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):***

*Construction of the shooting ranges results in the elimination of native vegetation (if present) within the disturbance areas. However, the areas of the proposed projects occupy a very small portion of the individual properties and are determined to have an insignificant impact on native vegetation in the area.*

*4a. The Boone & Crockett Club Foundation has a Deed of Conservation Easement with The Nature Conservancy. Item 4K3 of that deed says, Areas of surface disturbances shall have only limited and localized impact, shall be in sites approved by the Conservancy, and shall be mitigated by restoring soils to the original contours and replanting native vegetation."*

*4e. Introduction of noxious weed seeds may occur from vehicles that are carrying weed seeds. The increases in traffic to the property therefore have the potential to increase the spread of noxious weeds to the area. Landowners are required to control noxious weeds on their property. The established and projected weed control programs on the ranch would preclude the spread of noxious weeds. Additionally, the Deed of Conservation Easement's item 5B with The Nature Conservancy, prohibits the conversion of native vegetation to exotic cover species or the introduction of non-native plant species"*

* * 5. FISH/WILDLIFE	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:		X				

a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?						5a.
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				5f.
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. * * * For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		X				5f.
i. * * * For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		X				
j. Other:		X				

***Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Fish and Wildlife (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):***

*5a. The proposed shooting range sites are in mule deer, *Odocoileus hemionus*, winter range. However, to avoid any sensitive wintering wildlife conflicts the shooting ranges will only be operated from May 15 to October 1. The comparatively small area being disturbed, the relative frequency of range usage, and the seasonal limitations will result in little or no impact on mule deer and other wildlife in the area.*

*5f. The Grizzly Bear, *Ursus arctos horribilis*, is a threatened species under The Endangered Species Act and is further classified by the Montana Natural Heritage Program as a Species of Special Concern". South of Canada, there are five grizzly bear subpopulations and the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch is within one of those five subpopulation's region, the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem. However, Gary Olson, the area biologist for Region 4 of FWP, stated that he had no concerns for the Grizzly Bear and this project. The proposed sites are out in*

open rangeland and are not in riparian areas, which are the areas used by the bears.

### B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	
a. Increases in existing noise levels?				x		6a.
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?			X			
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?			X			
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?			X			
e. Other:			X			

#### ***Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Noise/Electrical Effects (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):***

*This is a rural area with a low population density. Consequently, no significant direct or indirect effects on noise levels are expected under the proposed project. Additionally, the project does not involve the creation of any electrostatic or electromagnetic charges.*

*6a. The nearest neighbors, about two miles from the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch, have been contacted about the future construction and operation of the shotgun and rifle ranges. They had no objections to their construction and operation.*

<b>7. LAND USE</b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated *</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				7a.
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other:		X				

***Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Use (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):***

*The proposed ranges are to be constructed on a very small portion of rangeland and will not affect any existing land uses nor will they adversely effect or relocate and residences.*

*7a. The ranch has historically been used as rangeland for grazing of livestock. The Deed of Conservation Easement with The Nature Conservancy recognizes that historic use and permits the ranch to graze and pasture cattle, horses, and/or llamas" recognizing that the ranch currently remains in a substantially undisturbed, natural state and has significant ecological and open-space values as defined in Montana's Conservation Easements' statutes and it provides significant relatively natural habitat for native plants and wildlife. Consequently, historic levels of grazing have not impacted the natural value of the property and these practices will be allowed to continue in the future, unless it causes accelerated erosion or damages the productivity of the soil. The relatively small area disturbed by the construction of these two ranges will have an insignificant impact on the either the wildlife use or the grazing practices on the area.*

8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u>	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	
			X			
	a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X			
	b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X			
	c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X			
	d. * * * For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		X			
	e. Other:		X			

***Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Risk/Health Hazards (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):***

*Some potential human health hazards are always possible on shotgun and rifle ranges. However, with the safe construction and operating procedures in this proposal the potential hazard is extremely small. Both of the ranges meet the standards of design, siting, and safety established by the National Rifle Association for ranges of this type.*

9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u>	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	
	a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X			

b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other:		X				9e.

***Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Community Impact (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):***

9e. Approximately 22 individuals and officials from the surrounding areas and communities were present at a public meeting held on April 10, 2002. There were no negative comments or opposition to the construction of the ranges at that time (See Attachment E). Comments from that meeting were all positive and constructive, and will be incorporated into the construction and operations plans.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or		X				

communications?						
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. * * Define projected revenue sources		X				
f. * * Define projected maintenance costs.		X				
g. Other:		X				

***Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Public Services/Taxes/Utilities (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):***

*The proposed construction of the shooting ranges will not have an effect the governmental services needed in the area and no additional demands would be placed on the local government.*

* * 11. <b>'STHETICS/RECREATION</b>	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an 'sthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the 'sthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. * * Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)		X				11c.
d. * * * For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		X				
e. Other:		X				

***Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on 'sthetics/Recreation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):***

*Recreational opportunities would increase with the construction of the proposed ranges.*

*11c. The increased recreational benefits to the community are in providing safe supervised range facilities for Hunter Education training, 4-H shooting sports, shooting instructor training, sportsman's clubs, etc., plus the availability of ranges for Federal, State and local law enforcement organizational uses.*

<b>12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>					<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated *</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
a. * * Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?			X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?			X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?			X				
d. * * * * For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)			X				
e. Other:			X				

***Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Cultural/Historical Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):***

*There are no known historical, archeological or cultural sites within the proposed area of the project.*

***SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA***

<b>13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>					<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated *</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:</b>	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)			X				



b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. * * * For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		X				
g. * * * * For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		X				

***Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Significance Criteria (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):***

*This proposed action has no impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant. Cumulative impacts have been assessed considering any incremental impact of the proposed action when they are combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and no significant impacts or substantially controversial issues were found. There are no extreme hazards created with this project and there are no conflicts with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan.*

**PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CONTINUED)**

***1. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:*** Only the proposed alternative and the no action alternative were considered. There were no other alternatives that were deemed reasonably available, nor prudent. Neither the proposed alternative nor the no action alternative would have any significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences. There are beneficial consequences to Acceptance of the proposed alternative (construction of the ranges), such as increased recreational opportunities, firearms and hunter safety training, and law enforcement training within the community. The no action alternative would be not to build the shooting ranges and continue on with present activities. Land use would remain the same (rangeland and grazing). Present activities also include occasional shooting activities on temporary ranges. However, using safely designated, designed and supervised ranges, such as the proposed alternative is the prudent alternative.

2. *Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:*

*None proposed.*

### **PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT**

*All of the pertinent or potential impacts of the project have been reviewed, discussed, and analyzed. Due to the minor nature and insignificant effects of the proposed action, this should be considered the final version of the environmental assessment. There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative. The strong, positive public comments and attendance at the public hearing, combined with the potential for adding an important resource to the shooting sports and hunter education resources for the Dupuyer area and the State of Montana all support the approval of the proposed alternative. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should approve the proposed alternative for the construction of the shooting ranges for the Elmer E. Rasmuson Wildlife Conservation Center on the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch.*

### **PART IV. EA CONCLUSION SECTION**

1. *Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required (YES/NO)? If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.*

*An EIS is not required. There were no significant environmental or economic impacts discovered in the assessment process.*

2. *Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any, and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances? A public hearing was held on April 10 to seek comment on the proposed construction of the ranges on the ranch. Notices were also published in three local newspapers. Minutes of that meeting are attached. There were no negative comments or objections to the project from those present at the meeting, nor have any negative comments been received from the public or any governmental entity. Comments from that meeting were all positive and constructive, and will be incorporated into the construction and operations plans (See Attachment E).*

3. *Duration of comment period, if any.*

*A 15 day public comment period will be implemented upon staff review of the EA.*

4. *Name, title, address and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:*

*Gene R. Hickman  
Wildlife Biologist and Sole Proprietor of  
Ecological Assessments  
8842 Douglas Circle  
Helena, MT 59602  
(406) 458-3884*

**Montana Department  
of  
Fish, Wildlife & Parks**



1400 So. 19th  
Bozeman, MT 59715

November 28, 1995

TO: Governor's Office, Glenn Marx, Room 204, State Capitol, P.O. Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801  
Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Room 106, POB 201704, Helena, MT 59620-1704  
Department of Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, POB 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901  
Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
    Director's Office  
    Parks Division  
    Fisheries Division  
    Wildlife Division  
    Lands Section  
    Design and Construction  
    Legal Unit  
    FWP Commissioners  
Montana Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, POB 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202  
Montana State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., POB 201800, Helena, MT 59620-1800  
Jim Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, POB 1184, Helena, MT 59624  
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, POB 595, Helena, MT 59624  
George Ochenski, POB 689, Helena, MT 59624  
Broadwater Co. Commissioners, 515 Broadway, Townsend, MT 59644  
Kathy Johnson, Dept. of State Lands, P.O. Box 201601, Helena, MT 59620  
Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771

Ladies and Gentlemen:

You recently received documents relating to the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks' (FWP) proposal to purchase 129 acres of the 51 Ranch property adjacent to the Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area north of Townsend, Montana.

The draft documents you received were not changed after a public review period. Please consider your previous copies as the final version.

A limited number of comments were received regarding acquisition of the 51 Ranch property. These comments are summarized in the enclosed **Decision Notice**. The comments received indicate strong support for the purchase of this property. **It is my recommendation to purchase the 51 Ranch property subject to approval by the FWP Commission.**

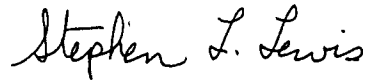
*Broadwater*

The FWP Commission will be asked to approve the purchase of this property at their regularly scheduled meeting in Helena on December 13, 1995.

If you have any further questions regarding this proposal, please call Region Three Headquarters at 994-4042.

Thank you very much for your interest and involvement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephen L. Lewis".

Stephen L. Lewis  
Regional Supervisor

**DECISION NOTICE**  
**51 RANCH PROPERTY ACQUISITION**  
**Prepared by Region 3, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks**  
**November 27, 1995**

**PROPOSAL**

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) is proposing to acquire important wildlife habitat adjacent to Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area (CFWMA) near Townsend, MT. The 129.07 acre parcel, which is owned by the 51 Ranch Corporation, is located in Broadwater County along the west side of CFWMA. FWP is proposing, in part, to use Habitat Montana Program funds to acquire this property. Additionally, property currently owned by FWP along the lower Missouri River will be exchanged to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for approximately 40 acres of BLM administered property located within other property owned by the 51 Ranch Corporation. 51 Ranch Corporation would acquire these 40 acres along with the Habitat Montana Program funds.

Failure by FWP to acquire this property would most likely result in this property being subdivided. Because of the proximity to CFWMA, residential development would have serious long term negative impacts on the wildlife resources associated with CFWMA and the public use of those resources. Reduced wildlife populations and reduced hunter opportunity may result. The opportunity to acquire this important parcel, which could become a productive addition to CFWMA, would be lost.

**MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) PROCESS**

The proposal has been outlined in an Environmental Assessment by FWP to satisfy the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). FWP is required to assess the impacts to the human and natural environment.

**ISSUES RAISED IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)**

The EA lists the issues in detail. These included the affect residential development of this property would have on the existing wildlife values of CFWMA and public use of that resource. Acquisition of this property would maintain existing wildlife values and would allow for continued public hunting on CFWMA. In addition, the acquired property would be developed into habitat which would be attractive to a variety of wildlife species.

## GENERAL SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

During the comment period we met with Broadwater County Commissioners to explain this proposal and to answer questions. The proposal was also discussed at meetings of the Skyline Sportsmens Association, Prickly Pear Sportsmens Association and Broadwater Rod and Gun Club.

We received a total of 16 comments: 9 written, 6 verbal during the public hearing, and 1 verbal via telephone. Copies of written comments are attached.

## SPECIFIC SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

### **Written Comments**

Seven of the written comments were very supportive of FWP acquiring the 51 Ranch property and iterated similar comments. The common theme of these 7 comments was that FWP needs to acquire this property to prevent negative impacts which would affect management of the wildlife resources on CFWMA should subdivision take place on this property. It was felt this property could add to the "watchable wildlife" program on the WMA and would help maintain visual aesthetics along Highway 287 by providing an "agricultural" setting as opposed to residential development. Comments also suggested the acquisition was needed to protect the considerable investment already made on the WMA for wildlife. Potential loss of opportunity to hunt on the west side of the WMA was also stated. It was felt that the 51 Ranch property could be developed into productive habitat for a wide variety of wildlife species.

One comment from the Montana Historical Society simply made FWP aware of cultural sites that occur near the 51 Ranch property. None of the sites occur on this property.

The only non-supportive comments came from the Broadwater County Commission. These comments are summarized and addressed in the following:

1. **Comment:** County Commissioners felt the State should not be buying up private land.

**Department Response:** The majority of wildlife habitat protected since the inception of the Habitat Montana Program has been through Conservation Easements. Page 4 of the EA lists the various alternatives considered for this proposal of which a conservation easement was one. However, the 51 Ranch was not interested in a conservation easement and acquisition was the only viable alternative that would protect this habitat and the existing values already

associated with the WMA.

**2. Comment:** Commissioners wondered why money was now available to acquire this property when it wasn't available in the past to develop park facilities on the south end of Canyon Ferry Reservoir.

**Department Response:** As stated on Page 1 of the EA, with the passing of HB 526 by the Montana Legislature in 1987, specific FWP hunting license revenues are earmarked to secure wildlife habitat through lease, conservation easement, or fee title acquisition. The intent of the Legislature was that these funds be utilized for preservation of wildlife habitat and by law they can't be used for developing park facilities.

**3. Comment:** Commissioners suggested the price was excessive for agricultural land and questioned whether this was a good expenditure of tax dollars.

**Department Response:** The price would be excessive for agricultural land but this property has been subdivided and has been filed as subdivided with the County. Comparable property in the subdivision north of the 51 Ranch property has been selling for more per acre than what FWP will pay per acre for this property. As stated earlier, revenues from hunting licenses would be used to acquire this property.

### **Verbal Comments**

Only one verbal comment via telephone was received and was similar in nature to the seven supportive written comments.

### **Public Hearing**

A public hearing was held at the Townsend Elementary Community Room in Townsend on November 8, 1995. A total of 10 people attended the hearing of which 6 provided some form of comment. Four of the six people commenting were in favor of FWP acquiring the 51 Ranch property while one had concerns which we tried to address and the other person had a negative comment.

Specific concerns expressed by Gay Ann Masolo, local Legislator, were:

1. Would FWP be able to control noxious weeds on this property?  
FWP responded that they could and would have the available funding through the Habitat Montana Program to do so. Additionally, on Page 3 of the Management

Plan developed for this proposal, Objective 3 is to control noxious weeds and appropriate strategies to accomplish this are spelled out under the objective.

2. Mrs. Masolo was concerned that there was a misconception on the part of some of her constituents regarding the source of funding to acquire the 51 Ranch property. It was explained to her where the funds were generated and a subsequent article in the local newspaper, the Townsend Star, also attempted to clarify the funding source.

Another individual at the public hearing had a negative comment:

3. This individual would not state his name but felt FWP wanted to acquire the 51 Ranch property and close it off to everyone. On page 11 of the EA, under Summary Evaluation of Significance, FWP states the reasons for wanting to acquire this property. On page 3 of the Management Plan, Objective 2 discusses access to the property and Objective 4 on page 4 discusses the potential of developing an agricultural lease on the property.



## DECISION

Utilizing the EA and public comment, a decision must be rendered by FWP which addresses the concerns and issues identified for this proposed acquisition.

The Habitat Montana Program has in recent years been effective at preserving important wildlife habitats primarily through the use of Conservation Easements. This was not an option in this case. Fee title acquisition is the only possibility of protecting this property from residential development. FWP strongly feels acquisition of the 51 Ranch property is essential to maintaining existing wildlife values on CFWMA and is most likely necessary in maintaining the hunting tradition established on the area. Furthermore, FWP believes wildlife habitat on the property can be developed to the benefit of a wide variety of wildlife species.

After review of this proposal and the corresponding public support, it is my recommendation to purchase the 51 Ranch property subject to approval by the FWP Commission.

I furthermore find there to be no significant impacts associated with this action and conclude an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. The completed Environmental Assessment is an appropriate level of analysis.

Stephen L. Lewis

Stephen L. Lewis  
Regional Supervisor  
Bozeman, MT  
November 27, 1995

266-5417

Miller P. 1/1



DUCKS  
UNLIMITED  
INC.

*Don*

DUCKS UNLIMITED, INC.  
GREAT PLAINS REGIONAL OFFICE

3502 Franklin Avenue  
Bismarck, North Dakota 58501-0761  
(701) 258-5599

November 3, 1995

**RECEIVED**

NOV 14 1995

**FIELD SERVICES**

Donald Childress, Administrator of Wildlife  
MT Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
1420 East 6th Avenue  
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Don:

Thank you for sending the Draft Environmental Assessment and Management Plan for the acquisition of the 51 Ranch property near Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and Reservoir to Ducks Unlimited for review. Ducks Unlimited is highly supportive of this purchase by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. This acquisition will supply valuable upland cover habitat for nesting waterfowl and other ground nesting wildlife species and insure that previous investments by the Department and Ducks Unlimited to develop this beautiful wildlife management area are secured. Ducks Unlimited has spent over \$56,000 in the development of two habitat enhancement projects on Canyon Ferry WMA. We are pleased that your Department seeks to expand the habitat base which will be available in the future for use by numerous wildlife species and populations and by the public, both consumptive and nonconsumptive, on Canyon Ferry WMA.

I would encourage you to contact Marc Pierce, Ducks Unlimited Senior Vice President, or Steve Bayless, Ducks Unlimited Regional Director, both of whom strongly support this proposed acquisition, if you feel their presence at the Commission meeting when this acquisition is addressed would be of help.

Again, Ducks Unlimited appreciates the opportunity to comment relative to this property purchase as an addition to the Canyon Ferry WMA. We applaud the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks in its positive, ongoing efforts to acquire, develop, restore and manage important waterfowl habitats for increased production.

Yours,

*Rick Warhurst*

Rick Warhurst  
Regional Biological Supervisor

cc: Marc Pierce  
Steve Bayless

Post-it* Fax Note	7671	Date	11/21	# of pages	1
To	Tom Carlsen		From	Debra	
Co./Dept.			Co.		
Phone #	266-5474		Phone #		
Fax #			Fax #		



# Prickly Pear Sportsmen's Association

November 14, 1995

51 Ranch Acquisition  
% Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
P.O. Box 998  
Townsend, Mt. 59644

Dear FWP:

The Prickly Pear Sportsmen's Association (PPSA) discussed the Draft Environmental Assessment at our November membership meeting. Unfortunately, our meeting date was the same night as the public hearing in Townsend.

We believe this acquisition would be a good use of the habitat funds that are generated from sportsmen's licence sales. Opportunities to hunt and observe watchable wildlife will be expanded. If the property is not purchased at this time, it will probably be subdivided.

If this parcel were subdivided there will be a negative impact on wildlife and recreational opportunities on the adjacent Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area. In addition, this parcel of land has good potential to be converted into a quality habitat.

Sincerely,

Bob Bugni  
President  
Prickly Pear Sportsmen's Association  
P.O. Box 48  
East Helena, Mt. 59635  
227-8749 (h) 444-0289 (w)

cc: file

November 10, 1995

51 Ranch Acquisition  
% Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
P.O. Box 998  
Townsend, MT 59644

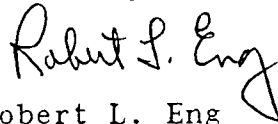
To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing as a staunch supporter of the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks efforts in the 51 Ranch Acquisition. Acquiring this land is an obvious plus, if for no other reason than to protect the investment already made in the adjoining wildlife management area. If the 51 Ranch were to be developed into a housing project, it would only be a matter of time before a delegation with a petition to prevent hunting would be before the Fish and Game Commission.

A second benefit would be the opportunity for developing a more diverse habitat along the west side pond. At present, a narrow band of riparian habitat exists along the pond with virtually no vegetation from there to the road. With a dramatic change in land use, this area could be developed into productive habitat for a wide variety of game and non-game species. This could enhance this area many fold, making it much more productive and attractive to the hunter and non-hunter alike.

In short, as mentioned earlier this purchase is a must to protect the sizeable investment already made in the Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Eng  
2310 Highland Court  
Bozeman, MT 59715



## NUNN & ASSOCIATES

7191 Highway 287  
Townsend, MT 59644  
(406) 266-4287

10/25/95

51 Ranch Acquisition  
C/O Montana FWP  
P.O. Box 998  
Townsend, MT, 59644

Nunn & Associates would like to support Montana FWP's in their planning process to purchase 129 Acres of the 51 Ranch. We believe this is a great decision and an excellent expenditure of taxpayers dollars to provide additional habitat to the wolf project.

You are to be commended for moving on this project before this property is subdivided and developed.

The property will add to an already existing great place for watchable wildlife and sportsman activity.

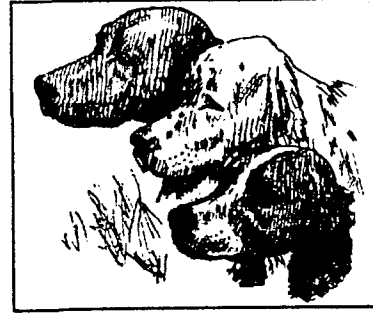
Keep up the great work and let us know if there is anything we can help with or stay involved.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment

Chris Nunn

November 22, 1995

51 Ranch Acquisition  
c/o Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
P.O. Box 998  
Townsend, MT 59644



Dear Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Personnel:

This letter is to express the Missouri Headwaters Gun Dog Club's (MHGDC) support for the purchase of the 129 acres of the 51 Ranch adjacent to the Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area. Our club has 120 Montanans as members who have the common interest of hunting dogs. Many of us hunt the Canyon Ferry WMA during the fall. It provides quality outdoor recreation opportunities and we support this acquisition to enhance the wildlife habitats associated with the WMA.

Most of our members are successful business persons and we understand that many Montanans have benefited economically from subdivisions. However, people who join our club are also very interested in expanded and improved wildlife habitat and its positive impact on our hunting and recreational opportunities. We understand that land-use decisions in Montana today are typically very complex, involving many conflicting interests. In this case, we feel that a subdivision on the 51 Ranch's 129 acres would have an immense negative impact on the Canyon Ferry WMA. Thus, we support using Habitat Montana Program funds to purchase the parcel and put it in the WMA.

The first club goal listed in our bylaws is to join in wildlife conservation efforts. Our club's goals of improving the quality of hunting dogs and their use is secondary to wildlife enhancement concerns. We see the 51 Ranch acquisition as an opportunity to meet both our conservation goal and our bird dog recreation goal.

Every member of our club, with very few exceptions, has purchased hunting licenses in Montana, contributing to the Habitat Montana Program. We see the 51 Ranch purchase as a wise use of our "tax" dollars. In addition, many of our members are avid upland bird hunters and we encourage Fish, Wildlife and Parks managers to improve pheasant habitat on the Canyon Ferry WMA along with improved environments for other species.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposed acquisition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Shannon Taylor". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Dr. Shannon Taylor  
Legislative Liaison  
Missouri Head Waters Gun Dog Club  
9714 Cougar Drive  
Bozeman, Montana 59715  
406-585-9723

CANYON FERRY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

51 RANCH CO. LAND ACQUISITION PROPOSAL

PUBLIC HEARING  
November 8, 1995

\*\*\*\*\*

comment form

\*\*\*\*\*

Name: Bethany Ihle

Address: Box 54 Townsend 59644

Affiliation: Townsend Resident & homeowner 266-3428(W)  
5151(H)

Proponent: X Opponent:        Other:       

Please submit your views, arguments, endorsements in the following space. Attach additional information to this form if you wish.

I believe the land acquisition would make an excellent addition to the management area because it would help maintain visual aesthetics along Hwy 287 as travelers head into Townsend. It will also help to maintain the "agricultural" setting which is rapidly diminishing on the north side of town.

- Recommend trying to get volunteer labor (e.g. 4-H, Boy Scouts, etc.) help do some of the fence work & other improvements to generate more interest in the management area. I believe the community doesn't know/appreciate what an asset the "dikes" are. Eventually want to work with you guys on some paved or smoother paths on the dikes so that

Education & Accessibility (needed more emphasis. Public can/shd help on both. app. 11-12-95)   
 Elderly people in wheel chair have cross it. 11-12-95

BROADWATER COUNTY  
**Board of County Commissioners**

406-266-3405  
515 BROADWAY  
TOWNSEND, MONTANA 59644



COMMISSIONERS:  
JAMES V. HOHN  
JAMES R. McCULLOUGH

November 8, 1995

Debby Dils  
Land Section Supervisor  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
P. O. Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Dear Debby:

On behalf of the Broadwater County Commissioners, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for appearing before the commission to inform us of the proposed 51 Ranch acquisition by Fish, Wildlife and Parks. It is the philosophy of this commission that the state should not be buying up private land. It is interesting to note that when your department managed Canyon Ferry Lake there was never any money for improvements at this end of the lake, however, now there is a large amount of money available for land acquisition. It also seems that the price of \$250,000.00 is excessive in consideration of what other agriculture land is selling for at the present time. Is this a good way to spend tax dollars?

Thank you for this opportunity to express our concerns. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "J. Hohn", written over a horizontal line.

JAMES V. HOHN, Chairman  
Broadwater County Commission

JVH/cy



Nov. 20, 1995

Land Accusation Dept;

Ref; 129 acres of 51 Ranch Corp.  
of Townsend.

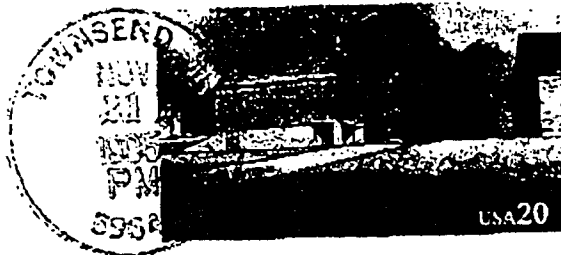
I am in favor of the FWP buying  
these 129 acres of land adjacent  
to Canyon Ferry Wildlife Manage-  
ment Area.

You have my support.

Thank you.

*John L. Stoner*

John L. Stoner  
63 River Road  
Townsend, MT. 59644



Mont. Dept. Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Land Accusation Dept.  
1420 East 6th Ave.  
Helena, MT 59620

59644



# Montana Historical Society

## Historic Preservation Office

1410 8th Avenue • PO Box 201202 • Helena, MT 59620-1202 • (406) 444-7715 • FAX (406) 444-6575

October 30, 1995

51 Ranch Acquisition  
% Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks  
POB 998  
Townsend, MT 59644

RE: 51 Acquisition EA

Dear Madam or Sir:

Thank you for providing the above referenced EA for our review. We were unable to locate past correspondence regarding the proposed action, though it is possible that we reviewed such correspondence under different title. We did want to make you aware of the very rich archaeological potential of the immediate area. We have enclosed a map showing the locations of several sites. Please do not release this information or this map. While we do not know of surface indications of archaeological sites at the proposed location, it is possible that significant intact sites may exist at some depth.

Sincerely,

Stan Wilmoth, Ph.D.  
Archaeologist

File MDFWP/Canyon Ferry WMA

## Oral Comments Received for the 51 Ranch Acquisition Proposal

\* Larry Michnevich from Bozeman called and expressed his support for purchasing the 51 Ranch Property. He also mentioned unanimous support by the Board of Directors of the Missouri Headwaters Gun Dog club. The club will be sending a letter of support to the Wildlife Division office. (call received by Rick Northrup, Townsend Field Office, 11/22/95)